

The Sinclair Broadcasting Group has made a conscious decision to abuse its use of the public airwaves. Airing material that is overtly political in nature under the guise of 'news content' violates its legal obligation to serve the public trust. Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. It is a deliberate strong-arm tactic to influence the outcome of an election.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves at taxpayer expense, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies such as Sinclair control large segments of the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at company headquarters, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. The rules must be strengthened to the extent that no company, such as Sinclair, can exert its influence over significant segments of the American public.

Free speech, a free press and free expression of ideas and opinions over the public airwaves is critical to maintaining our democracy. There must be a multitude of voices and images on our airwaves so that Americans can make informed decisions about their country. Media ownership, as exemplified by the Sinclair Group, stifles democracy and must be changed. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.